

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

**October 11, 2006
1:30 p.m., MST**

The Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force met in Hearing Room 3 of the Arizona Senate Building, 1700 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. MST.

1. Call to order

Present:

Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman
Mr. Jim DiCello
Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan
Dr. Eugene Garcia
Ms. Johanna Haver
Ms. Karen Merritt
Dr. John Baracy
Ms. Eileen Klein (replacement for Mr. Tom Tyree)

Absent:

Ms. Anna Rosas

A quorum was present for the purpose of conducting business.

2. Approval of September 21, 2006 and September 22, 2006 minutes

The minutes from September 21, 2006 and September 22, 2006 were held and are currently under review by the Task Force members.

3. Continue discussion of Structured English Immersion (SEI) program models

Flagstaff Unified School District

Mr. Michael Fillerup, the ELL Director for Flagstaff Unified School District, gave a brief overview of the unique English language acquisition challenges in his district. Flagstaff Unified School District has approximately 11,500 students, 1500 of whom are classified as English Language Learners. Of the 1500 ELL students, 65% are Native American. Although English is their primary language, these Native American students are often classified as Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE) students because their parents speak Native American languages in the home.

PHLOTE students are automatically administered the English language proficiency assessment. These students generally are orally proficient in English, but lack English proficiency in reading and writing. Therefore, they qualify for Structured English Immersion (SEI) instruction. They are not monolingual in languages other than English, and Mr. Fillerup expressed concerns that placing these Native American students with the monolingual ELL students who are mostly Spanish-speakers would be detrimental to their education. Therefore, Native American ELL-classified students are placed in mainstream classrooms with proficient English speakers. This placement strengthens oral language development and emphasizes literacy in reading and writing. He urged the Task Force to have flexibility in their SEI models and to consider the unique needs of districts like Flagstaff Unified that provide educational services to Native American students.

Mr. Fillerup stated that Flagstaff Unified School District's SEI program for kindergarten through 5th grade monolingual ELL students consists of four hours of SEI instruction in self-contained classrooms. After attending the four-hour instructional block, students attend mainstream classes for the remainder of their school day. This formula of half day of SEI instruction and half day of integration into mainstream classrooms has been successful in facilitating English acquisition. In the middle school and high school, monolingual ELL students receive one hour of English language development and one-to-two hours of sheltered instruction in content areas such as math and science. These students are then placed in mainstream content area classrooms for the remainder of their school day.

In 2005-2006, 13 of 19 schools in Flagstaff Unified made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Yuma Elementary School District #1 (K-8)

The second presentation was by Ms. Ursula Gray, Assessment Coordinator and Ms. Norma Basolet, Director of Federal Programs and English Language Learners from Yuma Elementary School District #1. Yuma Elementary is a kindergarten through eighth grade district with approximately 10,556 students. The district has 14 K-5 schools and 5 middle schools. Of the 10,556 students, 2195 are classified as English language learners. One third of the ELL students are migrants who leave in March before most of the spring testing.

During the first year in the district's SEI program, students receive up to 90 minutes of English language development instruction and 45 minutes of intervention support before school, if needed. During the second year in the SEI program, students receive 60 minutes of English language development. The district operates several intervention/special programs to assist both ELL students and gifted students, including additional Title 1-funded intervention programs after school. Yuma Elementary uses the Reading First curriculum in all of its schools. However, only 5 of the 19 schools have Reading First grants. All but 3 schools within the district made AYP.

One of the most challenging issues that the district has faced in recent years is the loss of approximately 10% of its federal funding.

Dr. Eugene Garcia asked what would be the teacher qualifications in an ideal SEI model. Ms. Basolet responded that the ideal SEI model would include fully-endorsed SEI instructors or instructors with either an English as a Second Language (ESL) or Bilingual endorsement. She stated that provisional SEI training is not enough. Ms. Basolet also stated that smaller class sizes would help. Fifteen students with two instructors would be best. Dr. Garcia asked for results of cohort data tracking of students (to determine student progress) and program exit information. Ms. Gray said she did not have that data with her, but she could provide the Task Force with this information. Ms. Karen Merritt asked how long it took ELL students to exit the SEI program. Ms. Gray said she would need to study their district data to determine the average number of years for students to achieve proficiency as defined by the state's English language proficiency assessment. Ms. Basolet stated that Yuma Elementary did not meet its Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO). However, the district did meet the language proficiency requirement.

Yuma Union High School District

Mr. Harold A. Kirchner, Director of Vocational Education/Federal Programs, Yuma Union High School District, gave the third presentation to the ELL Task Force. Yuma Union High School District has approximately 9741 students, 791 or 8.1% of which are English language learners. The district has 5 high schools and Vista High School has the highest percentage of ELLs (17.5%.) Mr. Kirchner credited the district's low number of English language learners to the English language acquisition success of the elementary school districts. A majority of the elementary students are reclassified as fluent English proficient before entering high school.

Yuma Union High School District uses an aggressive English immersion program that provides four hours of English Language Development (ELD) instruction for students in SEI Level One and SEI Level Two classes, and two hours of ELD instruction and reading for students in SEI Level Three and Level Four classes. Mr. Kirchner said that large class sizes are a challenge for the district because of funding requirements and lack of qualified teachers. The class size for SEI Level One at Cibola High School is approximately 19 students, while at Yuma High School the SEI Level One class size is approximately 30 students. Yuma Union High School District provides salary bonuses to ESL-endorsed teachers in order to attract them to the district.

Mr. Kirchner stated that Yuma Union uses flexible student groupings. SEI teachers with different strengths trade classes with mainstream content area teachers to work with mainstream classes on specific language skills while content area teachers work with ELL students in areas such as math vocabulary. One critical component of the district's SEI program is its participation in the "Yuma Plan." The Yuma Plan was implemented in prior years in order to create better articulation, coordination, and collaboration between the elementary districts and the high school district. The Yuma Plan contracts with West Ed, a national nonprofit research, development, and service agency working in the education field. West Ed trains Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies and SEI strategies to department chairs and other key faculty who then train classroom teachers. This training program is funded primarily through the district's maintenance and operations budget. West Ed also provides training so that teachers can become "highly qualified."

Dr. John Baracy asked about the district's use of paraprofessionals. Mr. Kirchner said that Yuma Union does not use paraprofessionals. Dr. Garcia asked how high school students are able to graduate on time with such a large block devoted to language development. Mr. Kirchner replied that it was because the SEI language development classes count as electives to fulfill graduation requirements. Ms. Karen Merritt asked what happens to students after they receive their SEI instruction. Mr. Kirchner answered that these students are placed in mainstream classrooms with their English proficient classmates. Ms. Merritt also asked how long it took for ELL students to become English proficient. Mr. Kirchner said that the length of time to achieve proficiency depended upon students' current English language development. Ms. Eileen Klein asked why different high schools had different numbers of ELL students reclassified. Mr. Kirchner said that on the handout that he provided to the Task Force members, one high school's information was incorrect, and another high school's information was due to a personnel situation. Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan asked about the overall attitude of teachers toward the four-hour English Language Development (ELD) instructional block. Mr. Kirchner said that the attitude of the staff was mostly good and that teachers were very supportive of the four-hour SEI language blocks.

Sunnyside Unified School District and Gallego Basic Elementary School

The fourth presentation was by Ms. Jeannie Favela, Director of Instructional Support Department, Sunnyside Unified School District, and by Ms. Mary Martinez, Principal of Gallego Basic Elementary School. Sunnyside Unified has a student enrollment of approximately 16,856, 31.6% of whom are English language learners. During the 2005 -2006 school year, 87.7% of the student population was Hispanic with a mobility rate of 35.1%. Within the 13 elementary schools, the number of ELL students ranges from approximately 409 ELL students at Los Amigos Elementary to 105 ELL students at Gallego Basic Elementary. During the 2005 – 2006 school year, 24% of the district's English language learners were reclassified as English proficient.

Ms. Martinez described some of the specific characteristics of Gallego Basic Elementary. Gallego has a magnet school design and parents apply for enrollment. After October 1, no new students are allowed to enroll. Once a student is accepted, the student's parents must sign a commitment contract that requires the parents to attend parent orientation classes, actively participate in school activities, and ensure that their student's homework is completed. Gallego Basic Elementary has a student population of approximately 584 students, 88.5% of whom are Hispanic. The student mobility rate is 5.7%. The first three grades at Gallego have the largest percentages of ELL students: 27.8% in Kindergarten; 29.1% in 1st grade; and, 30.6% in 2nd grade. During the 2005-2006 school year, 52 of 105 ELL students (52%) were reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (FEP.) Ms. Martinez said that 42% of the students who were reclassified scored at the Intermediate level in the initial English language assessment administered to them. She also stated that the average number of years for reclassification was two years for students who initially score at the Intermediate level.

Ms. Martinez recommended that when designing an ELL program, one should examine the effective use of intervention programs, have adjustable class schedules, and use data to address the needs of the students. She stressed the program should be considered more as a collection of services than as a single approach because different students need different services. The classes at Gallego Basic Elementary use flexible grouping by language proficiency levels.

Ms. Favela stated that the district's high schools did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), but the elementary schools did make AYP. The district met their Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO). When asked about teacher qualifications, Ms. Martinez stated that all teachers at Gallego have their provisional SEI training and many have their ESL endorsement.

Dr. John Baracy asked about staffing standards and professional development. Ms. Favela said the district's professional development was basically a menu-like program from which teachers could choose various options, including training in SIOP strategies. At Gallego, every Wednesday is an early release day for teacher enrichment, which includes instructional coaching. Dr. Baracy requested a copy of Sunnyside Unified School District's staff standards. Ms. Merritt asked about the SEI program structure for the high schools in the district. Ms. Favela said that pre-emergent English language learners have a half-day program for English language development in the high schools. Dr. Garcia asked for an articulated model of the SEI services Sunnyside Unified provides rather than its program model. Ms. Favela said that she could provide this information to the Task Force. Ms. Favela also stated that in the high schools, a pre-emergent English language learner typically achieves oral fluency in two years. An additional two to three years are needed to pass Arizona's Instrument for Measuring Standards (AIMS) and graduate.

Apache Junction Unified School District

Ms. Theresa Bartholomew, ELL Coordinator for Apache Junction Unified School District, was the fifth presenter. This smaller school district has a student population of approximately 6,000 students, 260 of whom are ELL students; 6.7% of the ELL students are in elementary; 2.75% of the ELL students are in middle school; and, 2% of the ELL students are in high school. Because of the low number of ELL students, the district uses a grade-clustering system, such as grouping 9th and 10th graders together. English language development is taught using grade-appropriate content where possible, and middle school and high school students receive two hours of English language development instruction per day. Because of the small percentage of ELL students, the district generally uses individual education plans that concentrate on the language needs of each student. ELL students typically take two-to-three years to reclassify as English proficient at the elementary level. Ms. Bartholomew said that high school ELL students take a little longer to reclassify. She stated that the district would like more time to concentrate on English language development, but logistically it isn't possible because of the lack of properly trained teachers with full ESL or Bilingual endorsements. Ms. Bartholomew said rising student test scores indicate that clustered SEI instruction is working.

Gilbert Unified School District

Ms. Beth King, ELL Coordinator for Gilbert Unified School District, was the sixth presenter. Gilbert Unified has a student population of approximately 37,255 students, 1,026 of whom are English language learners. Approximately 84% of the ELL students, 860 of the 1,026, are at the elementary level (kindergarten through 6th grades). Ms. King said that Gilbert Unified has had a high success rate in assisting limited English proficient students achieve proficiency. During the 2005 -2006 school year, about 19% of the district's ELL students were reclassified fluent English proficient.

In the District's SEI program for elementary students, first-year English language learners are placed in mainstream classrooms with their English-proficient peers if they scored at the Intermediate level on the Stanford English Language Proficiency (SELP) test or the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA). First-year students who score below the Intermediate level may be placed in an English language development instructional block depending on the individual student's performance and language requirements. The class size for an elementary SEI classroom is usually capped at 10 students per classroom. There are no more than 5 ELL students per mainstream classroom. Ms. King stated that each elementary school campus has an ELL specialist who is ESL endorsed, certified in Elementary education, and also may have a Reading endorsement. ELL Specialists team teach with mainstream teachers during the SEI instructional blocks. Second-year ELL students are placed, if possible, in mainstream classrooms. The district also has ELL Inclusion Technicians who are classified, non-certified staff members who assist mainstream content area teachers. The district provides training for its ELL Inclusion Technicians.

In the 7th and 8th grade (Junior High) and High School SEI program, ELL students who score below the Intermediate level receive a three-hour Language Arts block that includes English language development in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and academic support. The junior high and high school SEI classrooms are usually capped at 15 students per classroom. Intermediate-level ELL students receive two hours of SEI instruction. These students are mainstreamed the remainder of the school day. High School SEI instructors are ESL endorsed and "highly qualified."

Ms. King also presented information about a buddy system that Gilbert Unified uses for new monolingual non-English speaking students. These students are paired with bilingual students until they have learned basic school rules and have become familiar with the school setting and routines. Then, these new ELL students are paired with proficient English-speaking students who provide assistance and serve as role models. Ms. King stated that the district conducts monthly benchmark assessments in reading and math, and tutoring is available for ELL students in order to bring them to the academic/skill level of their appropriate grade-level peers. All teachers have provisional 15-hour SEI training and are working towards the additional 45 hours required for full SEI endorsement.

Dr. Garcia asked for data that indicates the success of the district's SEI program. Ms. King provided data on the district's Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO). Ms. King said she would furnish additional data to Ms. Irene Moreno who could distribute the information to the Task Force. Mr. DiCello asked how the ELL specialists are funded. Ms. King replied that

district funding pays for them. She said that the ELL Specialists are responsible for assessments, direct instruction, and mentoring.

4. Presentations and discussion of components, definitions and terms of SEI program models

Due to the late hour and length of the meeting, the ADE staff presentation was held.

5. Call to the Public

Mr. Jim DiCello, Acting Chairman, called for Public Testimony at 4:22 p.m.

Ms. Noemi Cortes, Language Acquisition Specialist for the Osborn Elementary School District, presented comments to the Task Force. She said that the Task Force needs to define what comprises a four-hour block of English language development instruction, at the elementary school, middle, and high school levels. She also would like the Task Force to examine class sizes and student/teacher ratios. Ms. Cortes asked that the Task Force keep in mind the shortage of qualified teachers. She posed the question, "If an ELL model requires more highly trained personnel, where will these people come from?" Ms. Cortes said that sometimes maintaining smaller class sizes is not so much a question of funding, but of available staff. Ms. Cortes' third concern was that classroom space availability be considered when the Task Force recommends class sizes. While funding may enable more and smaller classes, the funding does not pay for extra rooms or portables. Logistically, some things may not be possible for some schools. Ms. Cortes also asked the question, if a district has a successful existing ELL program, must the district change it? She concluded her remarks by requesting the Task Force to consider her issues of concern.

6. Adjourn

Mr. Jim DiCello announced that the next Task Force meeting will be on October 24 at 1:30 p.m. in room 417 of the Arizona Department of Education.

Mr. DiCello adjourned the October 11, 2006 meeting at 4:27 p.m. MST.

Arizona ELL Task Force

Alan Maguire, Chairman
December 18, 2006